

FOR A BETTER WORLD

IDEAS AND ACTION FOR A JUST ECONOMY

SPRING - SUMMER 2018

THE ROAD TO

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY



A Vision for
Transformative Markets

Collaborating to
Cool the Planet

Decoding Ethical
Label Claims



Fair World Project is a non-profit that advocates for fair trade policies that support small-scale farmers, artisans, and workers. We publish the perspectives of farmers, farmworkers, mission-driven business people, artisans, and activists working to build a better world.

WHY WE EXIST:

- Conscious consumers, armed with informed purchasing power, can create positive change and promote economic justice.
- Family-scale farmers and workers in both the Global South and Global North often face volatile prices, low wages and poor working conditions as a result of unfair trade policies and corporate practices. FWP promotes policy changes and market-based initiatives that address these systemic problems.
- Existing certifiers and membership organizations vary in their criteria and philosophy for qualification of products and brands certified to display eco-social labels or claims, such as fair trade. FWP educates organizations, retailers and consumers on the standards reflected in various certification schemes, and works to keep eco-social terms meaningful.

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COVER

In addition to coffee and cash crops, Joselinda Manueles grows all sorts of fresh vegetables to feed her family and community. She and her husband are members of Café Orgánico Marcala S.A. (COMSA) in Honduras. **PHOTO CREDIT: Equal Exchange.**

FROM THE DIRECTOR

I know I am not alone when I say that the last year has been a difficult one for many of us. As hurricane after hurricane hit coastal communities and wildfires blazed with new intensity up and down the western United States, the chaotic changes to our climate were tragically evident at every turn. And, from global summits to domestic policy, it is ever more apparent that our global systems are structured to favor those in power. Yet, as I gather the threads that make up this issue, a strong current runs through it: another world is possible.

Each article offers its own call for transformation, as well as stories and examples of the concrete steps we can all take to build that future. From Maryland and Peru, two different tales that nonetheless converge: small-scale farmers organizing their communities to educate one another, to lift each other up, and to get down to the business of growing things in ways that bring together the best of the old methods with the consciousness of new needs and possibilities. Instead of the same old industrial food system, they are working toward something else – a thriving, agroecological landscape.

Whether your goal is “economies of dignified and meaningful work, where community can flourish and people’s minds and bodies can evolve,” as Blain Snipstal says, or to achieve “genuine, profound, inclusive and democratic fair trade that truly transforms ... markets and economies,” as the members of the Símbolo de Pequeños Productores (SPP) state in their declaration, the theme of transformation runs through their words and projects.

You do not need me to tell you that headlines are grim and far too many policy solutions favor those with wealth and access. Yet even as another global climate summit wrapped up with little concrete progress, a group of small-scale farmers gathered to share their own climate solutions and the ways that they are building partnerships to transform their supply chains.

The tide is turning toward transformation, and I truly hope this issue inspires you to join the movements in your own community.

To a Better World,

Dana Geffner

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



NNIMMO BASSEY

Director of the ecological think-tank Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) and member of the steering committee of Oilwatch International. He received the Right Livelihood Award (also known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize") in 2010.



PAT MOONEY

Co-founder of the civil society organization ETC Group, Pat has worked on issues of emerging technologies and agriculture for forty years. He is also a member of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food). Pat received the Right Livelihood Award in 1985.



JOSÉ FERNANDO REYES CORDOVA

Born in Peru's Pacacaypampa District to a family of small-scale farmers. Jose Fernando started work with CEPICAFE in 2006 and later became the General Manager of Cooperative Agraria Norandino in 2013. His wish is to leave a better world for his family and contribute to improving the livelihoods of small producers and their families.



BLAIN SNIPSTAL

Small-scale collective farmer from the Black Dirt Farm Collective in Eastern Maryland. He is a North American leader of La Via Campesina, an organization that represents over 200 million farmers in 73 countries and a board member of the Southeastern African-American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON). Blain has worked to promote agroecology and provide education and training to underserved small-scale farmers.

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Alaffia Shea Butter Cooperative member, near Sokodé, Togo. 2013. PHOTO CREDIT: Alaffia.

FARMWORKERS WIN

Milk With Dignity In Vermont

Farmworker group Migrant Justice signed an historic deal with Ben & Jerry's, promising Milk with Dignity and ending a years-long campaign. Building on the worker-driven social responsibility model pioneered by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in the tomato fields of Florida, participating farms commit to providing their workers with adequate breaks, time off, paid sick days, safe working conditions and fair housing. Ben & Jerry's will pay a premium for milk from these farms to encourage participation, with a long-term goal of sourcing all their milk under the Milk with Dignity program.



NEW DOCUMENTARY COVERS ICONIC LABOR LEADER AND FEMINIST PIONEER

Dolores Huerta co-founded the first farmworker labor union alongside Cesar Chavez. Yet her contributions have largely gone unrecognized, even as her rallying cry ("Si, se puede!") continues to inspire generation after generation. Now, a new documentary tells the story of this feminist pioneer and her leadership role in key struggles for workers' rights, and for labor and racial justice.

For screening info, go to: DoloresTheMovie.com.



GUEST WORKERS STRIKE AND WIN CONCESSIONS IN WASHINGTON STATE

Agricultural workers on H-2A visas have long been some of the most precarious members of the workforce, as their work visas are tied to their jobs - if they lose their jobs, they risk deportation. Worker advocates have long criticized the H-2A visa program for exploitation. In September of 2017, in an unprecedented act of resistance, workers stood up for their rights, striking at an apple farm in Washington State. Supported by the independent union Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ), the two sides reached an agreement on concerns including health and safety issues.

High Stakes but Little Action at Global Climate Talks in Bonn

Nearly 20,000 delegates and activists gathered in Bonn, Germany for the COP23 (the 23rd Conference of the Parties), a conference organized under the United Nations framework that yielded the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. This marked the first such gathering since the U.S. government declared its intent to withdraw from the climate agreement.

Canada and the UK led a global alliance to reduce coal consumption, yet many activists pointed out that their efforts are more

rhetorical than substantive, as their governments continue fracking and pipeline construction. Indigenous groups also won some increased recognition of their rights, including consultation and participation in future negotiations, although the final language fell short of what was hoped for.

Overall, many activists were disappointed with the lack of urgency and effective commitments despite rising sea levels and extreme weather around the globe.



NEW ORGANIC STANDARD UNDER DEVELOPMENT

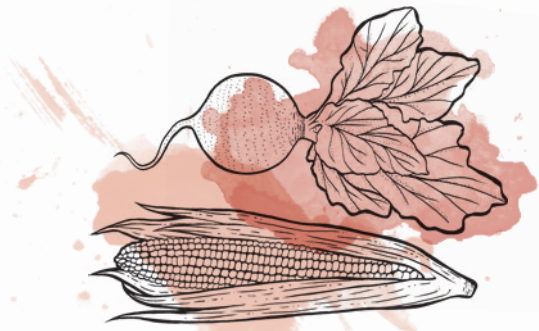
Recognizing the urgent need to spread regenerative farming practices and increase carbon sequestration in soils, a coalition of leaders in the food and farming movements are developing a new regenerative organic standard. This standard builds upon organic standards with additional standards for soil health, land management and animal welfare, as well as social standards like living wages and fair pricing. Standards were formulated with input from farmers, ranchers and business leaders like Patagonia and Dr. Bronner's, as well as from non-profit partners including Rodale Institute and Fair World Project. Development continues, with the hope that certified products may be ready for market in the coming year.



Workers' Rights And Food Justice Gain Mainstream Recognition

2017 saw several long-term organizing efforts gain recognition. Among their honorees, the James Beard Foundation gave one of their prestigious awards to the leaders of the Food Chain Workers Alliance, a coalition of worker-based organizations, for their leadership in amplifying the voices of food workers and transforming the food system through smaller campaigns and larger policy initiatives like the Good Food Purchasing Program.

Greg Asbed, co-founder of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), also won a MacArthur Genius Grant, highlighting the successes of the worker-led Fair Food Program at ending forced labor and improving conditions for farmworkers in Florida's tomato fields.



A RADICAL NEW VISION FOR THE U.S. FARM BILL

The Farm Bill, a massive omnibus bill that sets U.S. priorities for everything from crop insurance, farm subsidies and food stamps, to global trade and food aid, is up for renewal in 2018. Traditionally, the bill tends to fund agriculture as usual, however, Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) has introduced the "Food and Farm Act" which includes support for beginning farmers and those who grow sustainable food crops. The new bill contains several elements for which those in the sustainable food and farming movements have long advocated. It also acknowledges the importance of farm policy to the environment. However, Rep. Blumenauer is not on the committee tasked with creating the new Farm Bill, and a great deal of campaigning will be needed to incorporate this vision into the final version.



THE ROAD TO Food Sovereignty

WRITTEN BY PAT MOONEY & NNIMMO BASSEY

Time is running out if the world is going to slash greenhouse gas emissions enough to keep us below a 1.5°C temperature rise by 2100, an aspiration set by the Paris climate accords.

Two conferences this autumn tackled different ends of the problem, in splendid isolation from each other. The UN Committee on World Food Security held its annual meeting in Rome in mid-October, alarmed that the number of hungry people on the planet has suddenly climbed by 40 million in the past year – much of it due to the direct and indirect effects of climate change – and fearful that an unpredictable climate will cut global food production still more sharply in the decades ahead.

Meanwhile, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP23) met in Bonn and high on its agenda was the need to cut agriculture's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which experts say account for anywhere from one third to more than half of global warming. So, what for Rome delegates is a problem of food security is for Bonn delegates a problem of climate security.

The solution for both climate and food sovereignty is to dismantle the global industrial agri-food system (which we call the 'industrial food chain') and for governments to give more space to the already growing and resilient 'peasant food web' – the interlinked network of small-scale farmers, livestock-keepers, pastoralists, hunters and

gatherers, fishers and urban producers who, our research shows, already feed most of the world.

The solution for both climate and food sovereignty is to dismantle the global industrial agri-food system (which we call the 'industrial food chain')

In a report delivered to policymakers in both Rome and Bonn, Who Will Feed Us?, ETC Group (the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration) provides original data about the importance of peasant food systems and the real economic, environmental and social cost of industrial agriculture.

The industrial food chain is using at least 75 per cent of the world's agricultural land and most of agriculture's fossil fuel and freshwater resources to feed barely 30 per cent of the world's population. Conversely, more than 500 million peasant farms around the world



are using less than 25 per cent of the land – and almost no fossil fuels or chemicals – to feed 70 per cent of humanity.

Aside from burning vast quantities of fossil carbon, industry is also wasting money that could be directed to supporting equitable agroecological production while still lowering food prices for the world's marginalized consumers.

The statistics are staggering. Consumers pay \$7.5 trillion each year for industrially produced food. But between a third and half of this production is wasted along the way to the consumer or at the table: spoiled in the field or in transport, rejected from grocers because of blemishes, or left on the plate because of over-serving.

Conversely, households in OECD countries consume about a quarter more food than is needed – leading to obesity and related health problems.

The total food overproduced each year is worth \$3.8 trillion – a combination of \$2.49 trillion worth of food waste and \$1.26 trillion of over-consumption (see footnote 191 of the report). Burgeoning waists worldwide also have both human and economic costs.

When the wider environmental damages – including contaminated soils and water, greenhouse gas emissions – are added to the health and social impacts, the harm done by the industrial food chain is almost \$5 trillion (see footnote 193). For every dollar consumers spent in supermarkets, health and environmental damages cost two dollars more.

Added to the amount spent by consumers, this makes the real cost of industrial food \$12.4 trillion annually.

Policymakers negotiating the future of food and climate may wonder if it is possible to make such a dramatic change in our food production. Peasants may feed 70 per cent of the world's population now but can they adapt quickly enough to climate change to feed us in 2100? Which system,

the industrial food chain or the peasant food web, has the track record, innovative capacity, speed and flexibility needed to get us through the unparalleled threat of an unpredictable climate?

The answer is clear. Take experience: over the last century, the industrial food chain has not introduced a single new crop or livestock species to production but has cut the genetic diversity of our crops by 75 per cent, reduced the number of species by about one third, and reduced the nutritional

This process of seed and knowledge sharing from farmer to farmer is how maize spread across most of the regions of Africa and how sweet potatoes were planted everywhere in Papua New Guinea from mangrove swamps to mountain tops – all in less than a century – and how immigrants brought seeds from Europe that were growing across the Western Hemisphere within a generation.

When we compare the track record of the industrial food chain to the peasant food

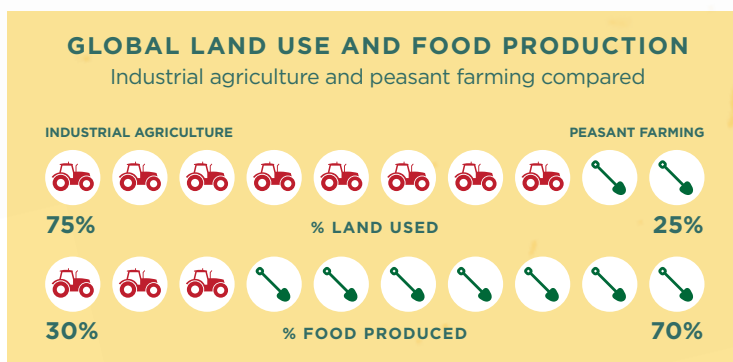
web we must conclude that our century-long experience with the chain shows that it is just too expensive, and it can't scale up. Meanwhile, with almost no support from governments, the peasant food web is already feeding 70 per cent of us (see page 12 of the report) – and could do much more, while producing drastically less greenhouse gas emissions than industrial methods.

To be clear, 'peasant farming as usual' is not an option.

Climate change will mean our over 10,000 years of agriculture has to deal with growing conditions that the world hasn't seen for three million years.

There is no reason to be sanguine about the problems ahead.

Peasants can scale up if the industrial chain gets off their backs. Governments must recognize peasants' rights to their land and seeds and support fair, peasant-led rural development and trade policies. We need to cut waste and shift our financial resources to strengthening the peasant food web and both tackling climate change and ensuring food sovereignty.



Global land use and food production: industrial agriculture and peasant farming compared. Source: New Internationalist. Data: ETC Group, Who Will Feed Us? Report

value of our crops by up to 40 per cent. The peasant web has introduced 2.1 million new plant varieties where industrial agriculture has only introduced 100,000 over the same time frame.

The industrial food chain works with only 137 crop species and five main livestock species. Stunningly, 45 per cent of the industry's research and development targets just one crop: maize. By contrast, the peasant web is breeding and growing 7,000 different crop species and 34 livestock species – like the alpaca, ñandu, and guinea pig.

Peasants also have the track record of dealing with new conditions quickly and effectively. Recent history is replete with evidence that peasant producers – before there were telegraphs or telephones or railways – have adapted new food species (through selective breeding) to an extraordinary range of different climatic conditions within the span of only a few human generations.

The ETC Group's publication, *Who Will Feed Us?* which compared peasant farming and industrial agriculture, can be downloaded in English and Spanish from their website. This article was first published in the *New Internationalist*.



Collaborating to Cool the Planet:

How Farmer-to-Farmer Trainings are Spreading New Solutions to Climate Change

In the fall of 2017, Grow Ahead, a partner of Fair World Project, successfully crowdfunded a farmer-to-farmer training in Nicaragua. The training brought together more than twenty farmers and participants from around the world, mostly coffee farmers from Central and South America. Fair World Project and Grow Ahead's Ryan Zinn caught up with one of the participants, José Fernando Reyes of Norandino Cooperative in Peru, to hear more.

PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION AND THE WORK THAT YOU DO.

Norandino Cooperative is located in the northern part of Peru. We have been working for more than twenty years with small-scale organic, fair trade producers of coffee, cocoa and sugarcane to sell their products into the specialty markets for organic and fair trade. In addition to selling the products of our campesino members, we also focus on caring for the environment, creating equal opportunities for men and women, and practicing agroforestry on our lands.

We started out by selling coffee into niche markets in both the U.S. and Europe and are now selling approximately 90,000 bags annually. [Editor's Note: One bag of coffee is approximately 152 pounds, so 90,000 bags is equal to 13,680,000 pounds of "green" unroasted coffee per year.] In 2000, we began to see that there might be opportunities to sell sugar, specifically panela, an unrefined sugar that you see commonly in Central America. We started producing a small amount, approximately eighteen tons in 2001, and we are now selling 600 tons of organic, small-farmer grown sugar per year. We have also been working with small-scale banana farmers.

In 2007, we took the next step in securing control of our coffee chain for producers and built our own beneficio, a centralized mill to process our coffees. We now process coffee both for our own members as well as for other cooperatives, currently about 400,000 bags per year. We also set up a savings and loan cooperative to provide financial services not just for our members, but also for the rest of our community here in northeastern Peru.

Currently, we are building a processing plant to extract cocoa liquor, one of the key ingredients in chocolate manufacturing. This all fits in with our general vision of growing and marketing high quality products and adding value to them, so our small-scale producers are able to capture more stages of the supply chain and increase their income that way.

HOW MANY FAMILIES ARE PART OF NORANDINO COOPERATIVE?

There are currently 5,500 families who are associated with the cooperative.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH THE COOPERATIVE?

I have been a member of the cooperative for eleven years.

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE FARMER-TO-FARMER TRAINING IN NICARAGUA THAT YOU PARTICIPATED IN?

Generally, these trainings amplify our vision. You learn new things, but they also allow you to understand others' realities, to compare and to see what is working there and what you can do more of in your own country. It is very interesting to me to see a project in Nicaragua that brings together monkeys and reforestation, or how COMSA in Honduras is using biofertilizers to regenerate the soil. So, it is really about looking for the best ideas and adapting them to your own reality. But if you do not see it in action, it is less motivating, and you might not really understand. For example, if someone had asked me before this what I think about a carbon credit project, I would have thought it was a big joke, but having seen it, how it works and how it was developed, I can see that it is possible to develop a system like that, and it seems like something that would be possible to do in our own country.

The training itself focused on reforestation projects and the work of Taking Root, a Canadian organization who is doing very interesting work, both at the community level through their reforestation program, and through the software that they have developed to track trees planted and the resulting impacts. It is a very interesting reforestation project because it combines organic methods with the production of coffee and trees intercropped for timber.

Taking Root was very specific about the methodology for work in the field: that it is not just how one designs the plots of land, but also how the data is gathered and systemized, and how they generate periodic reports for clients ... and then

also how field monitoring must be done. Generally, we found it interesting because it is a new topic here in South America, and very little is known about how it works and what sort of requirements must be met, from software to systems to the sort of work that needs to be done at the community level to make such a project function.

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT MORE ABOUT THE OTHERS AT THE TRAINING, AND WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM THEM?

It was interesting to talk to people from all over, to learn about the reality of other producers in this movement. For example, Hussen Ahmed from Ethiopia told us about his composting experience. He worked in the rose industry on a project using not just wasted roses but also the stems and branches as biomass for compost, which is good both for the flowers and the small-scale producers of Ethiopia.

It was really interesting to meet the folks from COMSA cooperative because their understanding of organic production is very, very advanced. It was also quite interesting to talk to my fellow Peruvians from CENFROCAFE and Sol y Café, cooperatives located in the central forests, and see the reforestation that is being done under their organic plans. They are doing it to comply with organic standards and to combat deforestation, but not at the level where we could make economic use of it over the medium- to long-term in the carbon credit market.

SO, IT SOUNDS TO ME THAT FOR THE PARTICIPANTS, THE CARBON CREDIT MARKETS WOULD BE SOMETHING SECONDARY, AS THEIR MAIN FOCUS REMAINS CULTIVATING ORGANIC, FAIR TRADE COFFEE, SUGARCANE AND OTHER CROPS, BUT THAT THIS CARBON CREDIT PROJECT COULD BE MAYBE A SECOND OR THIRD FOCUS?

Yes, obviously we are not going to get into the global carbon trading market just for the sake of trading. That is still a new thing in Latin America, and there is not much experience or interest yet. But we keep seeing more customers, and coffee traders especially, who are interested in the development of a carbon inset program, and that seems like it has the potential for us to develop additional income streams in our supply chains. We usually see that if a producer is working in his fields and taking care of the environment just as a conventional producer, there is no advantage to be had, and no payment for that work. But if the cooperatives implement reforestation programs and certification programs for carbon credits, that could provide additional income and a motivation to continue that stewardship, and they would see positive economic results both in the medium- and long-term.

AND NOW, COMING BACK TO YOUR COOPERATIVE, HOW DO YOU PLAN TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING AND APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED?

Well, at Norandino, we have our own reforestation project for the certification of recovered forests and a certification for the carbon credits that we developed with our coffee customers to offset their emissions. Through this project, we have reforested more than 250 hectares with native trees as well as some varieties that are useful for timber.

Co-op Coffees is one of our strategic allies with whom we have been working for many years, and then we have also been working with Equal Exchange and Theo Chocolate, as well as with La Siembra in Canada, as some of our principal allies. We have been working on the issue of climate change from several angles. Firstly, we are working to implement our reforestation plan with native trees, as well as some species that can be used more for industrial purposes. Also, we are developing a stronger organic fertilizer

TAKING ROOT is a non-profit organization based in Montreal (Canada) that develops social reforestation projects in collaboration with small-scale farmers in Nicaragua. Its activities are funded through the sale of carbon footprint management services and reforestation carbon offsets to businesses and individuals around the world. Founded in 2007, Taking Root's mission is to use reforestation as a tool to restore ecosystems, improve livelihoods and tackle climate change. It follows the "Plan Vivo" standard, a holistic reforestation framework that emphasizes community participation, using native tree species and protecting critical watersheds.

to increase coffee production. We have an educational program on organic farming and environmental issues. We are already thinking of starting a program to certify the production of seeds for coffee, cacao, sugarcane and trees. And we are thinking about entering the timber industry in the medium-term through reforestation and the production of certified timber and wood products.

We continue to be in conversation with Co-op Coffees about facilitating more of these exchanges and establishing some sort of Latin American platform, so we can see what is the most urgent. What we need to do is incorporate the carbon credit system into our system of organic production. Obviously, there ought to be some better adaptations and improvements. And the theme of seeds and cooperative education also is very good. So, I think that there is a clear vision, both for Norandino and also for our work with Co-op Coffees.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR NORANDINO AT THIS TIME?

One big challenge we have is around capturing as much of the added value as we can from the products that our members grow. We talked earlier about the coffee processing plant that we built, as well as the facilities to process cacao liquor. We also have a plant to pack up and automate the sugar production.

Another challenge that we have, on a very different theme, is how we mitigate the effects of climate change at the farm level. We have developed a reforestation program, a program for developing organic fertilizers to help make the plants more resilient, and an organic education program. It is imperative to make changes at the farm level, to change the mentality, and to continue to rehabilitate the forests and the water, because the impacts of climate change are global and do not stop for anyone.

WHAT HAS THAT CHANGING CLIMATE LOOKED LIKE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Obviously, the coffee leaf rust disease has destroyed so many crops. Then there have been varying temperatures in Peru which has also reduced our yields, and there is not much water available. The seasons are not as they were; what used to be winter has changed. There are very dry phases with drought, and then a lot of rain all at once.

ARE THERE ANY FINAL THOUGHTS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS?

As a cooperative, Norandino has cast our lot with organic farming. We want to work with small-scale farmers from peasant communities. I believe that our work, both for the cooperative and for all of us as human beings, is to tend to the natural world. At Norandino, we are doing that through growing high quality products and doing the reforestation work we talked about.

I would encourage consumers from the U.S., and from all over the world, to think about what their role is in tending to the natural world, and, hopefully, to include choosing products like ours that protect the environment and support opportunities for economic development in communities that have been less favored historically.

THIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH, LIGHTLY EDITED AND CONDENSED FOR CLARITY.

CARBON CREDITS: A SHORT PRIMER



CARBON CREDIT

This is a financial construct that attempts to quantify the cost of greenhouse gas

emissions, specifically one ton of carbon dioxide (often just referred to as “carbon” or “carbon emissions”).

The Kyoto climate accords of 1995 created the framework for trading these credits, with the goal of regulating and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and slowing global climate change. There are now multiple markets for trading these credits, both government mandated and voluntary.



CARBON OFFSETTING

This describes the process by which carbon emissions are reduced in one place to compensate

for emissions made elsewhere. On a consumer-facing level, you may see them marketed to “offset” the emissions related to a package you have sent or a trip you have taken. It is this process of buying carbon credits to offset emissions that is being referred to when you see a company make a claim about a product being “carbon neutral” or even “carbon negative.”

Not all carbon credits are created equal, however. While the number of trees planted as part of a community-led project on a small-scale farmer’s land may be the same as the number planted by a distant venture on a vast monoculture plantation, the overall impact on the planet is not the same.



CARBON INSETTING

This describes the process by which activity leading to emissions reduction or carbon sequestration takes place

within the context of an organization’s supply chain. This is the model described by Fernando of Norandino Cooperative when he speaks of their work with coffee buyers.

Fair For All:

THE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS EMBEDDED IN FAIR TRADE

WRITTEN BY ANNA CANNING

The global movement to lift up small-scale farmers and artisans celebrates the second Saturday in May as World Fair Trade Day. Each year, we come together as a movement to celebrate the hard work, resilience and innovation of these producers.

This year, as we see continued evidence that our world's climate is changing, it is ever more clear that the time is now to transition to new ways of feeding ourselves and tending to the land.

Studies by experts, and lists like the one compiled by Project Drawdown (www.drawdown.org) that rank climate change solutions, agree on many points with the fair trade principles enunciated by small-scale farmers (see page 15 in this issue for more information). Here are a few ways that small-scale farmers and their fair trade cooperatives are sequestering carbon, cooling the planet, and leading the way to a new future.

Regenerative organic farming practices:

Small-scale farmers are no strangers to traditional farming practices like rotating annual crops, growing perennials and cover crops, and composting every last scrap to build rich soil without resorting to using synthetic fertilizers.

Diverse, intercropped forests: These are vital ecosystems. Shade-grown coffee has long been appreciated for its superior, slow-ripened flavor and the bird habitat it preserves. Canopy trees sequester nitrogen, hold soil in place on steep hillsides, and provide additional resources for food security and/or other income streams for farmers. Crops like yerba mate

provide sustainable income alternatives to destructive practices like logging or cattle grazing.

Education of girls and empowerment of women:

This is an important climate solution that is deeply embedded in fair trade. Standards include requirements for gender equity in training and leadership roles. Through their cooperatives, many women have been empowered as farmers in their own rights, in turn strengthening communities. Fair trade premium projects often support community clinics, schools or even clean cooking stoves, nurturing families that can thrive, adapt and help slow deforestation.

Traditional land management: Many fair trade producers are members of indigenous communities that have long histories of marginalization and exploitation through colonialism. These same communities are often on the frontlines of resistance to extractive industries and disproportionately impacted by climate change. When climate solutions include indigenous land rights, everyone benefits: traditional agroecological practices work in concert with nature, going beyond conservation to grow livelihoods that are in harmony with nature and cultural traditions.

Land restoration: Around the world, great swaths of formerly productive land have been left barren, whether because of exploitative farming practices, war and strife, lack of markets, or a shortage of capital to invest. Through partnerships with committed fair trade buyers, small-scale farmers are replanting and bringing these lands back to life. They are cultivating heirloom varieties of cacao, fruit trees, and timber for sustainable harvest - and sequestering carbon while they are at it.

Fair prices: Low cacao prices have been leading to calamity in West Africa, as farmers

cut down trees to expand their farmland in a desperate move to boost incomes. One of the most well-known aspects of fair trade is its commitment to fair prices that insulate farmers from the volatility of commodity markets, and that is just one example of why a framework for fair payments is so critical - for the sake of farmers, their children and communities, and our planet as a whole.

Premiums and investment in community projects:

All the vital work described above is essential to the future of our farming systems and our planet, yet it goes beyond the scope afforded by standard commodity pricing. The fair trade system has long acknowledged the additional labor it requires via a premium paid for organic production. An additional "social premium" has provided cooperatives around the globe with resources to invest in community development projects, from schools to clinics to better infrastructure, that make them more resilient.

These are a few of the ways that small-scale farmers are growing a path forward. But they cannot do it alone. Solidarity and collaboration along the supply chain from dedicated fair trade companies support these farmer-led initiatives.

One of the central aspirations of the fair trade movement is to acknowledge and compensate for the role of producers: not merely as creators of raw materials, but for their knowledge, stewardship and skills. Likewise, at the other end of the supply chain, consumers are not just eaters, but valuable allies, educating themselves, choosing wisely and advocating for change in their communities.

Together, we can transform trade!



Product Picks

Deforestation, decreasing biodiversity, increasing pesticide use—those are just a few of the ways that our industrial food system is bad news for people and the planet. The good news is that it doesn't have to be that way. For millennia, communities have been farming, tending, and collecting a vast diversity of foods. These foods, their heirloom seeds, and, in some cases, the traditions that go with them, are endangered by the industrial food system, its patented seeds, its pollution, and its vast monocultures. Yet one way we can grow a new food system is to support those who are cultivating and innovating a very old one.

We asked members of our staff and editorial board for some of their current favorite products that support traditional foods and the communities they are rooted in.

Find them online or at your favorite natural food store!



NATIVE HARVEST WILD RICE

Over 90% of what is sold as “wild” rice in grocery stores today is actually cultivated rice, misleadingly labeled as wild and undercutting fair prices for the labor-intensive collection of native manoomin. I had my first taste of true wild rice on a trip to northern Minnesota, one of the areas where the Ojibwe have been hand-harvesting rice for centuries. Rice is an important part of traditional diet and income, and both are now under threat from cultivated “wild” rice as well as the race to patent and genetically manipulate the native species. This is a glaring example of how the industrial food complex often trumps food sovereignty. – KERSTIN

nativeharvest.com





THREE SISTERS NIXTAMAL TORTILLAS

The first time I tasted these tortillas, I was reminded of what real corn tastes like: nutty, a little sweet, and so satisfying that I find myself choosing plain beans and skipping fancy taco fixings to taste the tortilla a little more. “Three Sisters Nixtamal” evokes the traditional indigenous planting of corn, beans and squash together. That’s a reminder of traditional food systems that value biodiversity and nutrition. Yellow, blue or a blend of northwest-grown heirlooms, they are all organic, traditionally processed, and a staple in my kitchen. – ANNA
threesisterspdx.com



GUAYAKI YERBA MATE

Guayaki’s Yerba Mate is a great way to wake up in the morning. It also keeps me going in the afternoon. I prefer to make it the traditional way using the loose leaves because it helps me to stay grounded and reminds me of the importance of communities organizing. But when I’m on the road I use the tea bags. When I drink it, I often fantasize about sitting communally in Argentina sipping from the tip of a bombilla from a pre-Colombian gourd while gossiping with locals. – DANA
guayaki.com



LOTUS FOODS BLACK RICE

Lotus Foods has become my go-to dedicated fair trade brand for kitchen staples like rice and noodles. Their heirloom black rice is a particular favorite. In this age of climate crisis, economic inequality and gender disparity, their use of production methods which “practice water saving” and also “reduce methane emissions and women’s workloads” enables conscious shopping amid aisles and aisles of food choices with few similar assurances. – FLETCHER
shop.lotusfoods.com

NATIVE HARVEST MAPLE SYRUP

There is nothing that rivals the rich taste of a real maple syrup, and Native Harvest, who hand harvests their maple syrup in Minnesota, produces one of the best American all-pure maple syrups. Owned and operated by the non-profit White Earth Land Recovery Project, which facilitates the recovery of the original land base of the White Earth Indian Reservation, while preserving and restoring traditional practices of land stewardship, language fluency, community development, and the strengthening of spiritual and cultural heritage. I use Native Harvest’s maple syrup as a daily substitute for regular sugar, pouring a small amount in my morning coffee, and for smothering pancakes or drizzling on toast. I even use this maple syrup brushed on a filet of wild-caught sockeye salmon before putting it in the smoker. Delicious! – STUART
nativeharvest.com

Truly Equitable Trade:

A VISION FOR TRANSFORMATIVE MARKETS

In June of 2017, as part of their annual general assembly, **Símbolo de Pequeños Productores (SPP)**, known for their **Small Producers' Symbol** certification program, issued a statement assessing the state of fair trade, as well as a call to action for all of us in the fair trade movement. For more historical analysis and the full text of the call to action, go to <http://FairWorldProject.org/Voices>. The following has been condensed and edited for clarity.

FAIR TRADE: A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Currently, there are millions of small producers who, through their organizations, have attained greater value for their products and have generated considerable improvements in their living conditions. They have also built their capacities for generating processes for local development, well-being and political influence. There are numerous examples of small producer organizations that have built local processing plants, financial institutions, women's and youth organizations, health clinics, and education and training centers.

Fair trade has shown itself to be a successful model for capacity building and an excellent path for marginalized producers to enter the market under more fair conditions. Fair trade has thus become an example and a source of inspiration for generating sustainable, inclusive development models.

From our perspective, the keys to the success of fair trade are, and have been from the beginning, the following basic mechanisms:

- Products from democratic small producer organizations.
- Payment to small producers of guaranteed prices that cover the costs of sustainable production and organizational/social strengthening.
- Facilitation of harvest pre-financing, to allow storing of products by small producer organizations.
- Establishment of long-term trade relations.

Under fair trade principles and values, these basic mechanisms generate well-being, through increased local management capacities to achieve multiple economies, as well as through social and environmental benefits.

For businesses and consumers, fair trade has become an opportunity to directly influence the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the products they trade or consume on a daily basis.

NOT JUST ANOTHER COMMODITY

Unfortunately, we currently find practices and models under the "fair trade" banner that have little or nothing to do with trade that is genuinely equitable and fair – that is, inclusive and based on solidarity. This signifies a risk to the continuation and survival of the fair trade model.

To begin with, the inclusion of production models used by large producers has introduced unfair competition into fair trade. This is, first of all, because the structures of production costs and the organization of a large-scale private company are different than those of an organization of small producers. Thus, what can be considered a fair trade guaranteed price is different for each.

Secondly, another element of unfair competition is the incorporation of raw materials produced by non-organized individual producers, which are processed and/or traded by private companies into fair trade models. The reasoning is the same as in the case of large producers, given the different cost structures and diminished benefits and values.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, fair trade has opened its doors to large transnational companies. Collaboration with transnational brands, such as Nestlé, Dole and Mondelēz (which includes Cadbury, Nabisco, etc.), who have tarnished images and a long history of acting counter to fair trade values, has caused fair trade to be seriously questioned and even discredited.

Today's fair trade is no longer what was historically promised, nor what it once was – an alternative model of solidarity trade. It has become one more product in the conventional free market trade system. This has led many companies that are genuinely committed to fair trade to abandon the most common schemes of fair trade certification and promotion, preferring instead to invest in their own image as a fair trade brand and leaving behind a commitment to the fundamental fair trade mechanisms for small producers.

Another reason that some companies and consumers have distanced themselves from fair trade is that they question the high costs of fair trade certification and labeling systems. For many organizations and companies, certification costs and the bureaucratic process involved exceed the benefits they might receive in terms of promotion and guarantees.



Luz Mercedes Hernandez, member of CONACADO, Dominican Republic.
PHOTO CREDIT: Equal Exchange

Rigid fair trade certification systems lead to the loss of the original role of fair trade as an instrument for development and ongoing improvement. Instead, the fair trade market has become exclusive, and companies and small producer organizations are left on the sidelines, obliged to turn to unregulated trade schemes, such as so-called “direct trade,” leaving producers and consumers without the necessary guarantees and transparency offered by fair trade.

Lastly, we would like to emphasize that the traditional methods applied by most supermarket chains to fair trade products are a time bomb for the future of fair trade, as these supermarket chains subject fair trade products to the same obligatory advertising demands applied to the conventional products they offer.

Fair trade managed to create a boom by introducing solidarity trade to supermarkets. Now, we have the challenge of changing the rules with these supermarket chains, or needing to consolidate alternative channels of distribution with the capacity to reach the mass consumer market.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO TRANSFORM TRADE!

Although fair trade currently represents a small percentage of world trade, the achievements realized have been significant for millions of families in thousands of communities and towns in the Global South.

We will continue to create local and international fair trade markets based on the values of horizontal and participative democratic organization, equality, equity, solidarity, economic justice, and environmental, social and ecological sustainability. We will continue to work for genuine, profound, inclusive and democratic fair trade that truly transforms the way in which markets and economies are established.

We must come together and bring new life into fair trade!

TO READ THE FULL TEXT OF THE SPP CALL TO ACTION AND ADD YOUR NAME, GO TO:

<http://bit.ly/SupportSmallFarmerFairTrade>

To support small producers and companies committed to truly equitable trade, see our guide here: <http://fairworldproject.org/get-involved/mission-driven-brands/>

Original Fair Trade Principles and Values

For us, fair trade was created to establish an alternative market that would operate differently, and not incorporate the actors, structures and practices of conventional markets, as many “fair trade” entities are currently seeking to do.

From our point of view, the “original” fair trade values and principles include the following:

Participatory Democracy, both for producer organizations and in other fair trade companies, networks and institutions.

Self-Management and the self-determination of grassroots solutions.

Collectivity as the path to reach common goals together.

Solidarity because shared problems require collective solutions for all.

Justice through clear, fair rules that are adapted to local contexts.

Equity to build an economy where all can be active participants, and the weakest become stronger.

Transparency as an essential component of democratic organizations.

Trust to grow relationships based on collaboration, open dialogue and negotiation.

Prospects for Children and Youth both to have opportunities for education and to share in their families' work.

Promotion of Equality of Men and Women through opportunities for women, while acknowledging the diverse realities and cultural visions of communities.

Plurality through respect for every human being, independent of sex, ethnicity, age, religion, social condition, sexual orientation, capacity, etc.

Respect for Local Cultures whose languages, customs and key values may differ.

Dignified Livelihoods with enough means for nutritious food, good health, housing, education, opportunities for social and democratic engagement, and leisure.

Small Scale which benefits local economies all along the supply chain.

Direct Trade which connects producers and consumers in the closest commercial relationships possible.

Quality in goods and products, wherein producers are compensated for the efforts it requires.

Sustainable Prices which cover all the costs of production.

Strong Local Economies which support dignified, sustainable livelihoods for marginalized communities and the generations to come.

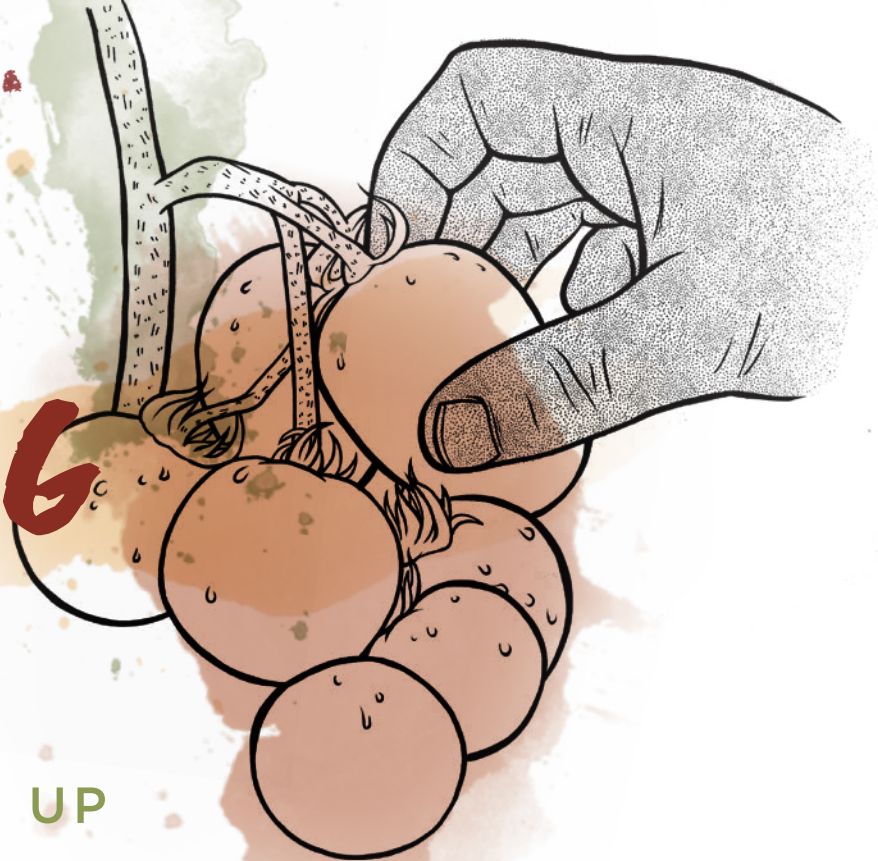
Local Added Value, wherein producers are not limited to simply providing raw materials.

Respect for the Environment as a basic requirement for fair trade organizations and society in general.

Respect for Health, wherein toxic substances or processing methods have no place in fair trade production.

BUILDING POWER

FROM THE GROUND UP



WRITTEN BY BLAIN SNIPSTAL

I am an itinerant, small-scale farmer and a returning generation farmer. With my farm partners, I co-manage Black Dirt Farm, an ecological vegetable farm on the eastern shores of Maryland on the ancestral land of Harriet Tubman. We are also part of Black Dirt Farm Collective, which is a regional organizing body providing strategic gatherings and trainings around Black agrarianism, agroecology, political formation, forestry and more throughout the mid-Atlantic.

I also manage and operate a small-scale building collective called Earthbound Building, focused on appropriate infrastructure for small-scale farms, where we build anything that a farm needs to be self-supporting and attain the economies of scale to grow: hoop houses, greenhouses, housing for farm labor, French drains, swales and gravel pads.

The common thread in all of this is the notion of creating economies of dignified and meaningful work, where community can flourish and people's minds and bodies can evolve, all while learning and exercising technical skills that allow us to work in harmony with nature.

As far as the work we do, I am less focused on shifting our food system than on transforming the very nature of our model of agriculture. Our food system is based on the plantation agriculture system. It is designed to allow the plantation model of agriculture to thrive, evolve and flourish. From an analytical standpoint, when we look at the model of

How do we unlock the creative potential of the human being? Not just theoretically, but within our social context with its long-standing racial, class and gender dynamics.

agriculture, we are not just talking about food anymore, but we are talking about the way that resources are distributed and whom they benefit.

Our work as the Black Dirt Farm Collective is focused on building a cadre of black and brown folks, women and queer folks – a community interested in building a model of agriculture and a food system in which we can all thrive. At the core of this is the question: how do we unlock the creative potential of the human being? Not just theoretically, but within our social context with its long-standing racial, class and gender dynamics that built this place.

One key way we do that is by hosting annual trainings around agroecology and Afro-ecology. We also do a youth agroecology encounter, where folks can dialogue on everything from the agrarian history of the south, agriculture and capitalism, and community forestry, to using biological tea on your farm, cover cropping, and visiting an aquaponics farm that is owned by a black farmer.

We do these trainings in rural areas, bringing in people from across the region. As the Black Dirt Farm Collective, when we do these trainings, it is always on the

land, and based on our experience as rural people and food producers, so that we can show folks that there is a whole world outside of concrete.

It is important to present these concepts of agroecology and food sovereignty in the long-standing traditions that we are a part of. What we do and how we understand who we are is almost entirely based upon our relationships to our ancestors

There is no food sovereignty without land; land really is the basis of power, and it does not get simpler than that.

and our spiritual relationships to the cosmos and the earth. The work that we are doing is grounded in that of our foremothers, and then, more broadly, in that of the ancestors we know from the history books and all the ones we think we might know who are not in the history books.

While food sovereignty may be a newer term in today's lexicon, if you look back at the thinking of indigenous authors, they are taking the same approach, looking broadly and holistically at what is needed to feed people across different realms: the physical, getting high quality foods to people; navigating the class dynamics surrounding access to that food; and the social, political, spiritual and emotional ways that we feed each other – and that is power.

There are so many bigger questions of race and imperialism that are inherent in food and agriculture. For a long time, it seemed that folks were not prepared to have that conversation, but more recently, they are. This year has shown us that if we are not prepared to support our ideas and to have a strong grounding in them, then the Right, and those who are confused by their rhetoric, will do everything in their power to undermine it and continue to expand colonialism and exploitation.

Further, there is no food sovereignty without land; land really is the basis of power, and it does not get simpler than that. Land is the primary mechanism for many of us poor folks and people of color to actually have something to stand on and have a future to farm. And it is not just a matter of having access to land that we can lease for five years at a time, but a place where we can actually build our identity.

Once you get land, the question becomes: what are you going to do with it? Answering that question embodies a lot of our work. We work with folks who have land and are farming to become more stable in order to develop their businesses and processes. We also work with folks who want to transition their land to help them understand the skills they need to generate income from the land, and to teach them how to think beyond just growing food to sell at the farmers' market, because there are so many other ways to do it.

I would suggest that food sovereignty and agroecology are concrete ways for a just transition to take place. Food sovereignty unlocks the social, political and economic potential for us to move in that direction. Capitalism is fundamentally designed to exploit us; it is only maintained through slavery all over the planet, and through the enslavement of the planet itself. Under the banners of food sovereignty and agroecology, we can have intersectional conversations and actions that bring together folks coming from the climate justice movement, those thinking about housing, economic and gender rights, and those from the agrarian sector. Together, in that political vein, we can have really critical dialogue, exchange ideas and work on projects.

For us, action is the name of the game. It is not enough to simply “vote with your fork,” as Michael Pollan put it over a decade ago, as that is a false ideology that does not address the power built into the current food system. It does not equate to impact if you are still just giving more money to the companies that can adapt and market better products.

I would encourage folks, who have the means, to support businesses in your communities that are run by people of color with social missions and methodologies.

As told to Fair World Project's Anna Canning. This story has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity.





Reference Guide

FAIR TRADE AND WORKER JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Use this guide to differentiate program claims and help you match your purchasing practices to your values.

KEY CREDIBLE PROGRAM NOT CREDIBLE PROGRAM APPROACH WITH CAUTION — NOT APPLICABLE

Fair trade is intended to benefit small-scale farmers and ensure fairness for producers. The principles of fair trade include*:

- Long-Term Direct Trading Relationships
- Prompt Payment of Fair Prices
- No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor
- Workplace Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association
- Democratic & Transparent Organizations
- Safe Working Conditions & Reasonable Work Hours
- Investment in Community Development Projects
- Environmental Sustainability
- Traceability and Transparency

FAIR TRADE AND SOLIDARITY LABELS








| LABEL | FAIR TRADE PROGRAM | GLOBAL NORTH SOLIDARITY PROGRAM | ANALYSIS |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| | — | | The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) sets standards for the “Food Justice Certified” label and includes strong requirements for the buyer/farmer relationship for U.S. farms of all sizes, focusing on empowering farmers to negotiate with buyers on fair terms. |
| | — | | The Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) is a North America-based solidarity membership organization that brings together all sectors of the domestic agriculture system to advocate for social justice. |
| | | | Fair for Life (FFL) is a fair trade labeling program developed by the Institute for Marketecology (IMO) and now held by Ecocert. The program has strong eligibility requirements, with a focus on marginalized producers. |
| | | — | The Fair Trade Federation (FTF) is a North America-based fair trade membership organization exclusively for brands and retailers dedicated to fair trade for all products and practices. Members may use the membership logo on products even though supply chains are not audited. |
| | | — | Fair Trade USA (FTUSA) is a standard-setter that has attempted to expand the fair trade model into new areas (such as the U.S.) and new sectors (such as seafood). |
| | | — | Fairtrade America is the U.S. fair trade labeling member of Fairtrade International (FTI), a strong standard-setter for organized small-scale producers in the Global South. |
| | | — | The Small Producers' Symbol (SPS) is the only farmer-led fair trade certification. The program has strong requirements for eligibility and focuses on farmer empowerment. |
| | | — | The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) is a global fair trade membership organization requiring strong internal control systems, peer review and external audits to guarantee that members comply with fair trade standards. Members must be fully committed to fair trade principles in all of their trading practices and may use the “WFTO Guarantee” label. |

* These fair trade principles apply to traditional South-to-North trading. A similar set of principles has been adopted for North-to-North trading in the U.S., and we refer to these North-to-North fair farmer programs as “Global North Solidarity Programs” in this guide.

Voluntary labor certifications allow companies to opt into following a set of standards to improve pay and working conditions for farm and factory workers. The principles of worker justice include:

- Inclusion of International Labor Organization (ILO) core conventions
- Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining
- Improving Wages with the Goal of Living Wages
- No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor
- Workplace Free of Discrimination, Abuse and Harassment
- Safe and Healthy Workplace
- Reasonable Working Hours
- Clear and Adequate Grievance Mechanisms with No Retaliation
- No Termination Without Just Cause

Though Fairtrade America, Fair for Life and Fair Trade USA may have different levels of credible farmworker and factory worker justice programs, they are misleadingly labeling products complying with their programs as “fair trade.” This guide evaluates the standards used for these programs, but does not address the misuse and co-option of the term “fair trade.”

| LABEL | FACTORY (APPAREL) | DOMESTIC FARMS | INTERNATIONAL FARMS | ANALYSIS |
|---|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|--|
|  | — | ✓ | — | The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) sets standards for the “Food Justice Certified” label and includes strong requirements for the farmer/farmworker relationship for U.S. farms of all sizes, focusing on empowering farmworkers to negotiate fair wages and employment conditions. |
|  | — | ✓ | — | The Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) is a North America-based solidarity membership organization that brings together all sectors of the domestic agriculture system to advocate for social justice. |
|  | — | ✓ | ⚠ * | The Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) sets standards for the “Responsible Grown - Farmworker Assured” label for food safety and farmworker justice. There is a strong leadership development component, but democratic worker committees and collective bargaining are not required. |
|  | — | ✓ | — | The Fair Food Program (FFP) sets and oversees a legally-binding code of conduct for employment conditions on farms and a direct economic transfer from end buyer to farmworkers as part of their “penny a pound” program. Starting with farmworkers on tomato fields in Florida, FFP has developed a successful monitoring and accountability program to address abuses and increase wages. |
|  | — | ⚠ | ⚠ | Fair for Life (FFL) focuses its farmworker justice program on marginalized workers and includes living wages and democratically administered premiums. These products would more accurately be labeled as “fair labor.” FFL is neither farmworker-led, nor includes farmworker representatives in formal governance positions and should therefore be approached with caution. |
|  | ✗ | ⚠ | ⚠ | Fair Trade USA (FTUSA) includes health and safety requirements and democratically administered premiums in its hired labor standards but lacks collective bargaining and living wage requirements. Its apparel standards do not include all steps of the supply chain. FTUSA is not a farmworker-led program and should therefore be approached with caution. |
|  | ✓ | — | ✓ | Fairtrade America and its international umbrella organization Fairtrade International (FTI) include collective bargaining and benchmarks for living wages in their worker justice standards, applicable to apparel factories and a limited number of agricultural commodities. These products would more accurately be labeled as “fair labor.” |

*EFI was started by domestic farmworker organizations and it is not yet clear whether its international expansion will include collaboration with local farmworker organizations.

HOW TO CHOOSE AUTHENTIC FAIR TRADE PRODUCTS

Five steps to choose fair trade products in line with your values.



EVALUATE. Look for full company commitment, membership organizations and strong fair trade certifications to distinguish products made by dedicated fair trade brands.



AVOID BAD ACTORS. Do not buy from corporate bad actors who happen to have a few fair trade products.



LOOK BEYOND CERTIFICATIONS. Learn which brands positively impact the communities where they operate and source from.



READ LABELS. Determine which ingredients (and what percentage of those ingredients) in the product are certified fair trade.



BE AN ACTIVIST. Ask your local grocer to carry more authentic fair trade products and get involved to change policy.



Shop Smart:

Decoding THE CLAIMS ON A LABEL

The market for ethically sourced, organically grown foods has expanded and so too have the number of companies trying to get in on the hype. There is plenty of short, catchy advice on ensuring your shopping cart contents match your values from “look for the label” to “vote with your fork.”

However, there’s a big difference between a company that is committed to fair trade and ethical principles in all their supply chains, and one that is just making a few feel-good claims in their marketing materials while continuing to exploit workers and farmers.

So while there is no “one-size-fits-all” prescription for choosing right, there are a few questions you can ask in the aisle to cut through the greenwashing and ensure your purchase makes an impact.

Be wary of meaningless claims

Are the certifications legitimate, third-party verifications?

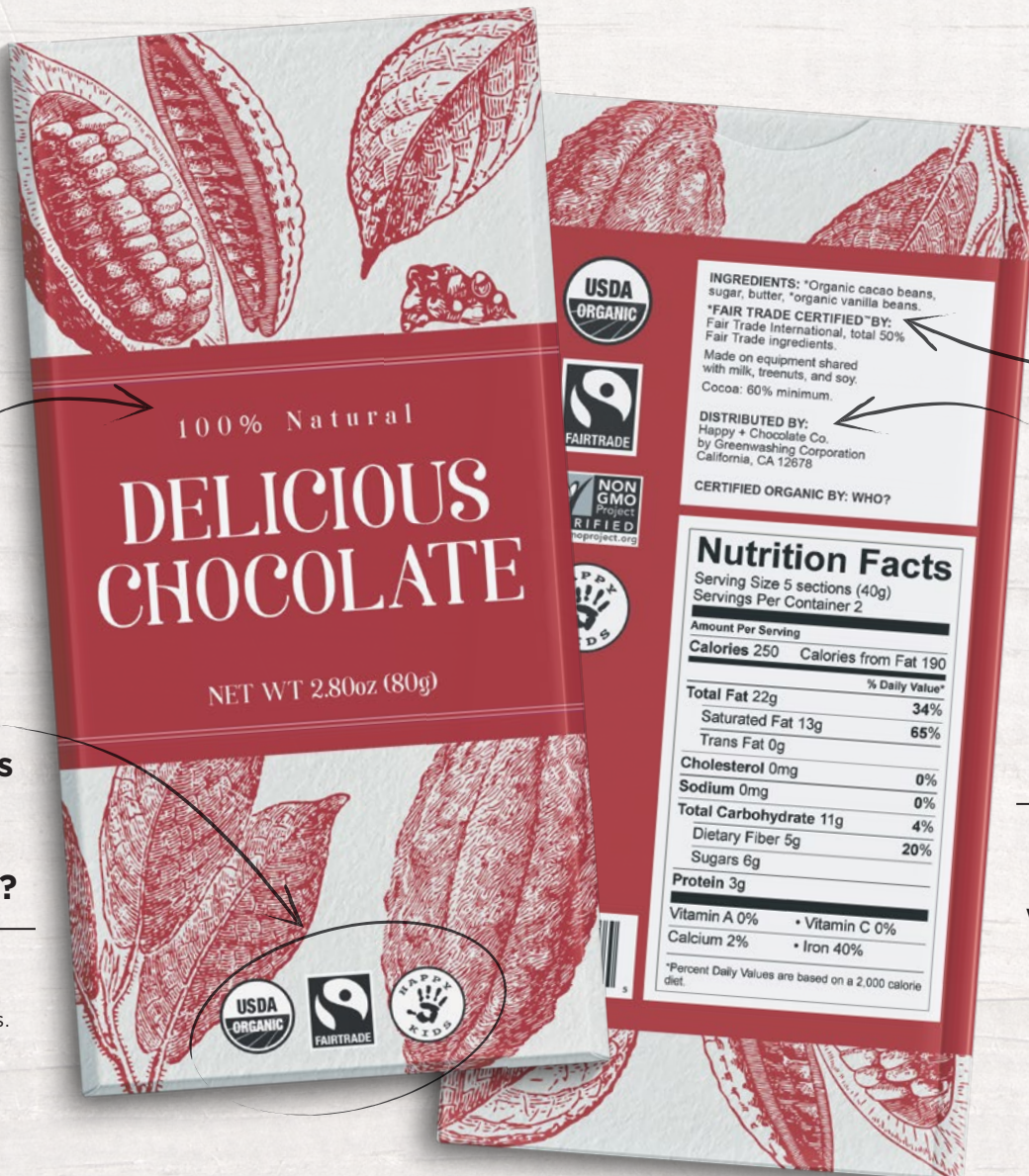
See our Reference Guide to fair trade and fair labor labels.

What percentage of ingredients are fair trade?

Who makes the product?

What else do you know about the company?

Take into consideration the whole company and what you know about their impact on your own community, the environment and labor rights globally.



Go to FairWorldProject.org for more analysis of certifications, and to see our directory of mission-driven companies working to transform the food system.